

455 10/17/62 *Walt Whitman, "The Great American Novel"*
12/24/62

Dear Dick,

My own view of "Farewell America", in both forms, and of Hepburn, in whatever form, are opposite yours. Your excitement tells me you've been had. Hold your own opinion until you've had a chance to know for yourself, but do not lose sight of mine and do nothing contrary to it.

In any sponsorship of him, the film or the book, please make certain it is very academic: every view must be presented, heard. Avoid any personal endorsement, for the whole thing is, I am absolutely confident, an enormous and very expensive puton, the only immediate reason for which seems to be the ruin of us all through the ruin of the Garrison investigation and the discrediting of criticism of the Commission, the Report, the government.

The book is very scholarly, in a pseudo-scholarly way. It says less about the actual assassination than anything yet written, but it is the one whose authors claim to have access to one of the assassins. It is also very wrong, in readily-checked ways, such as a shot from that one sixth-floor window.

The timing was incredibly perfect, to coincide with a scheduled Garrison error of first magnitude that was not made in the very last minute. When it was known that there was opposition in New Orleans, the scheduled appearance of the film in LA didn't come off. For two weeks "Hepburn" was incommunicado, he (Lamarre) now says because he was so very ill his entire blood supply had to be changed (with a remarkable recovery that had him promptly in the US the next week). This is said to be the work of the French intelligence, yet there was no one to answer the phone when Lamarre was "sick" and the film scheduled - and no airplane to fly the film to keep its commitment.

I would rather do a thing one shouldn't, ask you to take me on faith on this, for a specific reason: I want you to keep your eyes, ears and mind open and learn for me everything you can. I tell you this: I can connect Lamarre with what he should have no connection. So, do your thing, but be alert to every scrap of information you can get, no matter how minor, about him, his associates, the book, the movie, the source of the Zapruder footage they have - everything. I am satisfied this is an intelligence operation, but I'd rather let it go at that for the moment.

If, as I regard unlikely, it turns out he and it and they are for real, we will have confirmed it, which is worthwhile. If it turns out that I am right, then we will be on the way to knowing the story and the dramatic personae.

However, because the Z footage is in the film, ask yourself how they could have gotten it. He told someone from a private person of unusually good connections. I do not believe this is the case. The only sources known to me are LIFE, which I rule out; the Garrison office, where Ivo has never let it out of his possession or control; and these federal agencies: Archives, FBI, Secret Service and CIA (where I refer you to the appendix of PW and the CIA request for a print of the film for "training purposes"). I have little difficulty deciding what seems the most likely source.

This film and book say Hunt is the man behind the assassination. I think that, too, unlikely, but how convenient it is to have popular animosity turned toward an unpopular man of the right. One of the world's richest men with but a few years to live jeopardizing them this way? Nonsense.

They have done everything they could to involve Garrison in the book and film, yet the film has enough to get a mistrial in it. Steve Jaffe, who carried Garrison's credentials until two weeks ago, has film credit for doing nothing with the film. He has less knowledge of the assassination than anyone connected with any investigation. However, need I tell you what this connection with Garrison could do for the defense?

"Lamarre" is "Hepburn". I'd love to be able to study a copy of the film, but I would not regard it as a normal "research" tool. If you get to see it, or have a chance to examine it closely, frame by frame, get a very precise description of 210 for me, please. Of course, we first must know whether this and the other missing frames are included, which will help limit the possible sources, either way. He was evasive when I questioned him about this.

Please communicate my beliefs to Gary when you are in touch with him on this. I do not want either one of you to get yourselves compromised if this is not genuine or if it is an intelligence stunt.

By the way, did you get in touch with him or the other way around? How? Through whom?

Please, do, keep the closest, most detailed possible record and let me have it as you record it. Try, as perhaps you might in normal conversation, ^{to} learn who has helped him in the US, who he knows where in the US. I am interested in who he knows in New Orleans, but do not flag this to him. Who he knows elsewhere may also be very important.

I have an entirely different opinion of your work on the trajectory. That is meaningful and significant. In comment on what you say, it is my recollection the sight was not mounted when the rifle was received in DC.

When last I spoke to Dick Billings, which was when he left on his leave of absence that ends with his severance from LIFE, they had all their pictures under lock and key...There is no need to apologize for a minority view of the blue-shirted figure in the Hughes film. Each of these things should be checked out, if only to prove they are or may be wrong. If they turn out to be right, we have taken that additional tiny step forward. One of the things that would interest me is an accounting of all the prints of that film. I understand a black and white was also dubbed, en route New York. How much Z has gotten to date is also of interest to me. And, of course, LIFE has announced the "release" of the missing frames but has failed to respond to my request for copies....Of course, what they have and haven't used, what we do not know of, is also interesting. They are more than capable of not understanding what they have. And of not using it.

Have a good holiday.

Sincerely,